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The Human Comedy of Antoine Doinel: From Honoré de Balzac to François Truffaut[1]

ANER PREMINGER

ABSTRACT *The focus of this paper is the intertextual relationship between the work of François Truffaut and that of Honoré de Balzac. It explores Balzac's influence on the shaping of Truffaut's voice and argues that Balzac's* Human Comedy *served Truffaut as a model for some of his cinematic innovations. This applies to Truffaut's total* oeuvre*, but particularly to his series of autobiographical films, "The Adventures of Antoine Doinel":* The 400 Blows *(*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1959),* Antoine and Colette, Love at Twenty *(*Antoine et Colette, L'Amour à Vingt Ans*, 1962),* Stolen Kisses *(*Baisers Volés*, 1968),* Bed and Board *(*Domicile Conjugal*, 1970),* Love on the Run *(*L'Amour en Fuite*, 1979).*

In examining Truffaut's "rewriting" of Balzac, I adopt—and adapt—the intertextual approach of Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence." My paper applies Bloom's concept of misreading *to an examination of the relationship between Truffaut's autobiographical films, and Balzac's* Human Comedy*, both thematically and structurally.*

On 21 August 1850, the writer Victor Hugo read a eulogy over the grave of his colleague, the writer Honoré de Balzac. In this eulogy Hugo attempted to sum up Balzac's contribution to literature in particular and to culture in general. Among other things, Hugo said the following:

> The name of Balzac will form part of the luminous mark that our period will leave upon the future. […] M. de Balzac was one of the first among the greatest, one of the highest among the best. […] All his books make up one single book, a profound, luminous, living book, in which we see our entire contemporary civilization coming and going, moving along, with something of the bewildering and the terrible mixed in with the real, a marvelous book that the poet titled *Comedy* and that he could have titled *History* […] a book that is observation and that is imagination, that is prodigious in the true, the intimate, the *bourgeois*, the trivial, the material, and which at moments, among all the brusquely and broadly torn realities, suddenly allows us a view of the most somber and the most tragic ideal. […] This is the body of work that he leaves us, a body of work that is high and solid, a robust accumulation of granite tiers, a monument! A body of work from the heights of which his renown will shine resplendently from this time on.
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> [Le nom de Balzac se mêlera à la trace lumineuse que notre époque laissera dans l'avenir. […] M. de Balzac était un des premiers parmi les plus grands, un des plus

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> hauts parmi les meilleurs. […] Tous ses livres ne forment qu'un livre, livre vivant, lumineux, profond, où l'on voit aller et venir, et marcher et se mouvoir, avec je ne sais quoi d'effaré et de terrible mêlé au réel, toute notre civilisation contemporaine, livre merveilleux que le poète a intitulé "*Comédie*" et qu'il aurait pu intituler "*Histoire*" […]; livre qui est l'observation et qui est l'imagination; qui prodigue le vrai, l'intime, le bourgeois, le trivial, le matériel et qui, par moments, à travers toutes les réalités brusquement et largement déchirées, laisse tout à coup entrevoir le plus sombre et le plus tragique idéal. […] Voilà l'œuvre qu'il nous laisse, œuvre haute et solide, robuste entassement d'assises de granit, monument! œuvre du haut de laquelle resplendira désormais sa renommée.][2]

In the present paper I will try to prove that the filmmaker François Truffaut had these words of Hugo's in mind in the films that he created, and that they served him as a model for some of his cinematic innovations. This applies in general to Truffaut's total *oeuvre*, and in particular to his series of autobiographical films, "The Adventures of Antoine Doinel."[3]

To examine the complex cinematic relationship between Truffaut and Balzac, I have drawn upon the intertextual approach of Harold Bloom.[4] A central concept in Bloom's Freudian theory of the "anxiety of influence" is the conflict between the text and the intertext, which reflects the author's Oedipal struggle with his "poetic father," i.e. the greatest among his artistic precursors. This struggle, according to Bloom, is necessary for the perception of artistic value. From this Bloom derives his criteria for the definition of the canon, and his conception of the tradition as a developing canon. Poems, in the Bloomian discourse, are neither about subjects nor about themselves, but necessarily about other poems. Bloom defines the artistic act as a dialogue with the past. This struggle with the past causes the poet to "misread" the *oeuvre* of his poetic father. The misreading of the father plays a central role in the poet's construction of a denial mechanism towards the "anxiety of influence."[5]

In many of his films Truffaut mentions Balzac and relates to his works and his biography in various ways. In *The 400 Blows* (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1959), his first full-length narrative film, the protagonist, Antoine Doinel, a 12-year-old boy who is perceived as Truffaut's autobiographical alter ego, discovers Balzac and his book *Quest of the Absolute* (*La Recherche de L'Absolu*, 1834). After this literary encounter, Antoine builds a "shrine corner" to Balzac in his room. He hangs a picture of Balzac there, regularly lights a candle under the picture, and hides them behind a curtain. Later on in the film, the teacher asks his pupils to write an essay describing "An important event that you were personally involved in." Antoine, in a highly illuminated state, unhesitatingly writes a "misreading" of the death of the father from *Quest of the Absolute*, adapting it to an imaginary death of his own grandfather.[6] The act of adoration of Balzac receives a double resonance in the film in a later scene when the burning candle sets the curtain alight and Antoine's apartment almost goes up in flames. This plot motif contains both a literary allusion to *Quest of the Absolute* and a biographical allusion to Balzac's own life, as we can learn from Henri Troyat's biography of Balzac:

> In the period when he wrote this letter, Balzac was undertaking a new philosophical study, *Quest of the Absolute*. Its theme, once again, was the destructive intellectual obsession of the family circle. Since 1832 he had been thinking of transposing into a novel the character of Bernard Palissy, a 16th-century enamel artist and savant who,

> haunted by his project, had burned even his furniture in order to succeed in his experiments.
>
> [À l'époque où il écrit cette lettre, Balzac s'est attaqué à une nouvelle 'étude philosophique': *La Recherche de l'absolu*. Le théme en est, une fois de plus, l'obsession intellectuelle destructrice de l'entourage familial. Depuis 1832, il songeait à transposer dans un roman le personnage de Bernard Palissy, émailleur et savant du XVI siècle, qui, hanté par son projet, a brûlé jusqu'à ses meubles pour réussir ses expériences.][7]

This means that Antoine did not only absorb Balzac's text, to the point that his own composition was a "misreading" of Balzac, but also that without wanting to, he caused a fire as a result of his loss of control over his obsession, similarly to Bernard Palissy, Balzac's model for the hero of this book. The act of setting the room alight, without consciously choosing to, made the book an organic part of his life, in his absolute identification with Bernard Palissy. Moreover, in October 1846, 12 years after *Quest of the Absolute*, Balzac writes to his beloved Eve, and "informed her that he had almost been burned alive when a candle flame had ignited his cotton garments" ["Il l'informe qu'il a failli brûler vif, la flamme d'une bougie ayant mis le feu à son vêtement de cotton"].[8] So Balzac actually went through the experience he had written about years earlier, and this story repeats itself in Antoine's life.

The motif of the candle in honor of Balzac and the fire that it causes recurs once more in Truffaut's eighteenth film *The Green Room* (*La Chambre Verte*, 1978). The protagonist, Julien, becomes addicted to a death rite in the green room that he has built in memory of all the dead people he feels connected to. Each dead person is commemorated in the room by means of a picture with a candle burning beside it. The collection of dead people that dominate the life of the protagonist, who by no coincidence is played by Truffaut himself, can be seen in Bloomian terms as the giants with whom Truffaut wrestles and from whose grip he attempts to free himself. Among these dead, Balzac has a distinctive place, the ramifications of which upon the other dead figures receive very powerful cinematic expression. The destructive potential of adoration of the dead is realized when the room goes up in flames and is totally burned. The candle that ignites the blaze is the one dedicated to Balzac. Here too, as in *The 400 Blows*, Truffaut blurs the boundaries between Balzac and his characters in order to examine the boundary between the fictional reality of his characters—Antoine in *The 400 Blows*, Julien in *The Green Room*—and their actual reality, and the boundary between the two protagonists (Antoine and Julien) and the author who created them, Truffaut himself. There is thus a multi-layered intertextuality at work here, which enriches the discussion of the complex connection between life and its representation, between the objects of Antoine's and Julien's and Truffaut's dreams and their actual lives.

In Truffaut's second narrative film *Shoot the Pianist* (*Tirez sur le Pianiste*, 1960), Balzac's work echoes in a chauvinist conversation in an automobile, when one of the gangsters tells how his father, an obsessive skirt-chaser, was run over while pursuing a girl he had seen on the other side of the road. In 1976 Truffaut, in a letter to Jean Domarchi, writes that this idea was taken from Balzac's novel *Eugénie Grandet*.[9] A year later this story becomes the basis of his seventeenth film, *The Man Who Loved Women* (*L'Homme Qui Aimait Les Femmes*, 1977). The film opens with the protagonist's funeral,

which is attended by the dozens of women he had in his life. The film tells about his obsessive pursuit of the women who have come to the funeral. At the end of the film he is run over in the same way as the gangster in *Shoot the Pianist* described his father's death. What was a marginal dialogue bit in *Shoot the Pianist*, seventeen films later becomes the basis of another film, and in both cases the source that is echoed is Balzac.

His fourth film, *The Soft Skin* (*La Peau Douce*, 1964) refers to Balzac directly. Its central figure, Pierre Lachenay, is an expert on literature who travels around Europe giving popular lectures on Balzac's works. In various scenes in the course of the film, the subject of conversation is Balzac's writing and how it relates to life.

In his eighth film, *Stolen Kisses* (*Baisers Volés*, 1968), the third in the Antoine Doinel series of films, in the first scene immediately after the opening title, Antoine is conspicuously different among the soldiers he is with in the military prison. He sits in a distant corner, hiding behind a book—Balzac's *The Lily of the Valley* (*Le Lys Dans La Vallée*, 1835). This is one of a series of stories, "Scenes from Private Life," that Balzac began writing in 1832. Antoine, reading *The Lily of the Valley*, continues in a natural sequence from the Antoine who read and copied from *Quest of the Absolute* in *The 400 Blows*. A reading of Balzac's biography as written by Henri Troyat reveals to us why Truffaut made the particular choice of *The Lily of the Valley*:

> The echoes of that festive occasion would appear in a page of *The Lily of the Valley*. The young narrator, Félix de Vandenesse, is manifestly an incarnation of Honoré at fifteen.
>
> [Les échos de cette fête apparaîtront dans une page du *Lys dans la vallée*. Le jeune narrateur, Félix de Vandenesse, est manifestement une incarnation d'Honoré à quinze ans.][10]

The Lily of the Valley, then, discloses that Antoine embodies François Truffaut, just as Félix embodies Honoré. With this allusion, Truffaut affirms and gives legitimation to autobiography in cinema—a genre common in literature, but non-existent in cinema until the Antoine Doinel series of films.[11] Truffaut explains the motivation behind this innovation in his essay "What Do Critics Dream About?":

> When I was a critic, films were often more alive though less "intelligent" and "personal" than today. I put the words in quotes precisely because I hold that there was no lack of intelligent directors at that time, but that they were induced to mask their personalities so as to preserve a universality in their films. Intelligence stayed behind the camera; it didn't try to be in evidence on the screen. At the same time, it must be admitted that more important and profound things were said around the dinner table in real life than were reflected in the dialogue of the films that were being made, and that more daring things took place in bedrooms and elsewhere than in the movies' love scenes.[12]

Further on in the essay Truffaut describes the antithesis that he and his colleagues created in this context:

> The new wave, which was never a school or a tight group, was a spontaneous and important movement that spread rapidly beyond our borders. I feel myself very much part of it; I expressed in my articles the fervent wish for its coming, so much so that I could write, in 1957, a naive but sincere profession of faith: "The film of tomorrow

> appears to me as even more personal than an individual and autobiographical novel, like a confession, or a diary. The young filmmakers will express themselves in the first person and will relate what has happened to them: it may be the story of their first love or their most recent; of their political awakening; the story of a trip, a sickness, their military service, their marriage, their last vacation … and it will be enjoyable because it will be true and new … The film of tomorrow will be an act of love."[13]

These lines, which Truffaut wrote in 1957, received real and developing expression from one film to the next, in the Antoine Doinel series of films, until the fulfillment of the promise in 1979, in the film *Love on the Run* (*L'Amour en Fuite*, 1979). In 1968, when Truffaut made *Stolen Kisses*, he was in the middle of the "Antoine Doinel" project, even if he did not know it (it is the third of the five films in the series). His cinematic aspiration is very reminiscent of Balzac, as we may see from Troyat's observations:

> From one book to the next, Balzac comes to realize that his stories, apparently quite dissimilar to one another, actually form part of a vast structure that he could not yet define but that assured them of a second level of meaning. They had their own value when taken separately, but they benefited from a new illumination if one thought that they depended upon an architectural ensemble. At first he felt the need to evoke with precision the *milieu* in which his characters moved, the cities, the neighborhoods, the houses they lived in, the trades they practiced, in order to embrace the different aspects of the human condition in a single gaze. As he reflected upon this, the scenes assembled themselves, mutually explained one another, organized themselves to the dimensions of a fresco. He divined that he was on the verge of a revelation about himself and about his work, and did not know too well how to interpret it. "You were very touched by my poor *E. Grandet*, which paints provincial life so well," he wrote to Zulma Carraud. "But a work which has to contain all the figures and all the social positions cannot, I believe, be comprehended until it is completed. It is a matter of some twenty volumes in octavo that one day will be reduced to ten volumes, so as to be affordable to all" (Letter dated 30 January 1834).
>
> [D'un livre à l'autre, Balzac se rend compte que ses récits, en apparence fort dissemblables, font en réalité partie d'une vaste structure, qu'il ne peut définir encore mais qui leur assure une signification seconde. Ils ont, pris isolément, leur valeur propre, mais bénéficient d'un éclairage nouveau si l'on considère qu'ils dépendent d'un ensemble architectural. D'emblée, il éprouve le besoin d'évoquer avec précision le milieu où se meuvent ses personnages, les villes, les quartiers, les maisons, qu'ils habitent, les métiers qu'ils exercent, afin d'embrasser d'un seul regard les différents aspects de la condition humaine. À mesure qu'il y réfléchit, les tableaux s'assemblent, s'expliquent mutuellement, s'organisent aux dimensions d'une fresque. Il devine qu'il est au bord d'une révélation sur lui-même et sur son œuvre, et ne sait trop comment l'interpréter. "Vous avez été bien peu touchée de ma pauvre *E. Grandet,* qui peint si bien la vie de province," écrit-il à Zulma Carraud. "Mais une œuvre qui doit contenir toutes les figures et toutes les positions sociales ne pourra, je crois, être comprise que quand elle sera terminée. C'est quelque chose que vingt volumes in-8° qui se réduiront en dix volumes un jour, pour être à la portée de toutes les bourses" (Lettre du 30 janvier 1834).][14]

The Lily of the Valley in Antoine's hands at the beginning of the film thus expresses Truffaut's aspiration in the Antoine Doinel series of films to grapple, for the first time in the history of cinema, with a task similar to the one that Balzac took upon himself in literature in the early nineteenth century. At this stage it appears that Truffaut has decided on such a cycle of films, and from here on he shapes his styles in the context of the unity of the entire cycle. While Balzac had been able to return to his earlier books and to change them, and had also done so in line with the new conception that he had crystallized, Truffaut is limited by the qualities of his medium and by the economic constraints that make it impossible to change films once their production is concluded. Truffaut overcomes this obstacle by means of an intertextuality that accords a new meaning to the quoted source and changes it without shooting it anew. The choice of *The Lily of the Valley* has a further meaning as a specific allusion. Just as Truffaut quotes Balzac and uses him to express his own world, Antoine too quotes Balzac and uses him to express his love for Fabienne Tabard, his employer's wife. In *The 400 Blows* Antoine rewrote Balzac without being conscious of it. This time he addresses his beloved as Madame de Mortsauf from *The Lily of the Valley*. Only by means of literature does Antoine dare to reveal his love to her. Troyat points to the affinity between *The Lily of the Valley* and Balzac's life, and thus illuminates the meaning of the allusion as an expression of the complex connection between life and its literary and cinematic representation in the Doinel cycle of films:

> The heroine of *The Lily of the Valley*, Mme de Mortsauf, would, like Mme de Berny, have a way of pronouncing the "sh" sound that would put men into a trance. Never having known maternal tenderness, Honoré would faint with gratitude before this woman who offered all the qualities that Charlotte Laure [Balzac's mother, A.P.] lacked. The fact that they were almost the same age, far from cooling him, exalted him. Better than anyone else, this new arrival into his life would know, he thought, how to make him forget the sorrows, the humiliations, the frustrations, of his early years in his family.
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> [L'héroïne du *Lys dans la vallée*, Mme de Mortsauf, aura, comme Mme de Berny, une façon de prononcer le "ch" qui met les hommes en transe. N'ayant jamais connu la tendresse maternelle, Honoré défaille de gratitude devant cette femme qui offre toutes les qualités dont Charlotte Laure est dépourvue. Le fait qu'elles aient à peu près le même âge, loin de le glacer, l'exalt. Mieux que quiconque, cette nouvelle venue dans sa vie saurait, pense-t-il, lui faire oublier les chagrins, les humiliations, les frustrations de ses premiéres années en famille.][15]

Troyat's words about Balzac are largely true of Truffaut too, and are entirely true of the young Antoine, who is in love with a woman old enough to be his mother. So Antoine writes to Fabienne Tabard: "Anything between us is as impossible as the love of Félix de Vandenesse to Madame de Mortsauf in Balzac's *Lily of the Valley*" (*Stolen Kisses*, 1968, 1:09:30–1:09:38 min.). Antoine quotes Balzac and assumes that this is an accurate and static description of life everywhere. Truffaut, however, revises the quotation when Fabienne appears in Antoine's room. In contrast to Mme. de Mortsauf's behavior in *The Lily of the Valley*, she says to him: "I've read Balzac too. Like you, I think it's beautiful. But you forget one thing, Madame de Mortsauf loved Félix de Vandenesse. It is less a love story than a tragedy for in the end she died because she

could not share that love. And I am no apparition, but a woman very definitely" (*Stolen Kisses*, 1968, 1:11:38–1:12:20 min.). Fabienne says "apparition," a word that the men used when speaking about Catherine in *Jules et Jim* (1961).[16] After this monologue, Fabienne proposes to Antoine that they share their mutual love once only and then part forever. She locks the room and says: "In our stories the lady throws the key from the window but for us this vase will do" (*Stolen Kisses*, 1968, 1:14:34–1:14:42 min.).

The key falls into the vase, and the scene ends. In this misreading of Balzac's story (actually, in Fabienne's last sentence Truffaut accords it the status of representing an entire literary style), Truffaut rebels against it, and in his film creates an authentic expression of life as he understands it. This rebellion is not only an expression of the spirit of the time, for in Balzac's life, too, Mme. de Berny, who was the model for Mme. de Mortsauf, finally responded to Balzac's courting and became his lover. Actually, Truffaut rebels against Balzac's conception of art as a total spectacle (this is in fact also the Hollywood conception of cinema that Truffaut is rebelling against)—a conception that is also reflected in his choice of a story with characteristics that identify it as a tragedy. Truffaut, in contrast to Balzac, chooses a simple love story, and even if this love is brief and transient, both its beginning and its end are part of the life that Truffaut wants to express in his films.

Troyat explains Balzac:

> Their Platonic love had cult-like dimensions. Through greatness of soul they denied themselves the base pleasures of the body. With the aim of better preserving this treasure of chastity, Félix de Vandenesse, while totally adoring the woman whom he saw as a saint, formed a liaison with a beautiful Englishwoman, Lady Dudley (an amalgam of Mme Guidoboni-Visconti, Lady Ellenborough and Mme de Castries), who satisfied his desires but left his heart in repose. On the threshold of death, the sublime Mme de Mortsauf regretted not having responded to the call of the body. Had she not been deprived of a true happiness, admittedly common, but irreplaceable, in having obstinately pursued a noble and sterile passion? Being older than Félix she had been for him a surrogate mother, circumspect and gentle, and he had been for her a surrogate son, at once eager and respectful. Through an excess of sentiment, they had both passed beside real life in order to exalt themselves in an illusion.
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> [Leur amour platonique a les dimensions d'un culte. Par grandeur d'âme, ils se refusent les bas plaisirs du corps. Afin de mieux préserver ce trésor de chasteté, Félix de Vandenesse, tout en adorant la femme en qui il voit une sainte, se lie avec une belle Anglaise, Lady Dudley (amalgame de Mme Guidoboni-Visconti, de Lady Ellenborough et de Mme de Castries), qui comble ses désirs mais laisse son cœur en repos. Au seuil de la mort, la sublime Mme de Mortsauf regrette de n'avoir pas cédé à l'appel de la chair. Ne s'est-elle pas privée d'un vrai bonheure, certes commun, mais irremplaçable, en s'acharnant à poursuivre une noble et stérile passion? Plus âgée que Félix, elle a été pour lui une fausse mère, avisée et douce, et il a été pour elle un faux fils, à la fois empressé et respectueux. Par excès de sentiment, ils sont passés tous deux à côté de la vie réelle pour s'exalter dans l'illusion.][17]

In his misreading of the relations of the lovers in *The Lily of the Valley*, Truffaut, in Bloom's terms, accords a corrective interpretation to Balzac, one that is close to Troyat's interpretation. Truffaut rejects the romantic approach that distinguishes be-

tween erotic love and Platonic love. In the world that he creates in his films love is not eternal, but it is attainable at particular points of time.

At the beginning of *Bed and Board* (*Domicile Conjugal*, 1970), Truffaut's eleventh film and the fourth in the Antoine Doinel cycle, Antoine stands in his flower shop, which is situated in the backyard of his home. Antoine is painting flowers with red paint. Later on he explains that this is a chemical experiment with the aim of finding the "absolute red."

Antoine's quest for the absolute red alludes simultaneously to Balzac's novel *Quest of the Absolute* and to the interconnection of *Bed and Board*, *Stolen Kisses* and *The 400 Blows* by means of Balzac's *Quest of the Absolute* and *The Lily of the Valley*. The relevance of *Quest of the Absolute* is made more pointed by Troyat's conclusion:

> Possessing a fine fortune, Balzac's Flemish hero, Balthazar Claës, dedicates himself to chemistry and attempts, at the age of fifty, to discover "the absolute," the unique element that recurs under a thousand different aspects in the things of nature. To decompose nitrogen,[18] which should give him the key to the mystery, he closes himself in his studio, surrounds himself with books, neglects his wife and his children, dissipates his entire inheritance. […] He wants to be the first to announce the principle of the "chemical absolute." This quest for the final truth, for the universal explanation, annihilates him as if God were refusing to be spied upon in His creation.
>
> [Possesseur d'une belle fortune, le héros flamand de Balzac, Balthazar Claës, se consacre à la chimie et tente, à cinquante ans, de découvrir "l'absolu," l'élément unique qui se retrouve sous mille aspects différents dans les choses de la nature. Pour décomposer l'azote, qui doit lui donner la clef du mystère, il s'enferme dans son atelier, s'entoure de livres, néglige sa femme et ses enfants, dilapide tout son héritage. […] Il veut être le premier à énoncer le principe de "l'absolu chimique." Cette quête de la vérité finale, de l'explication universelle, l'annihile comme si Dieu se refusait à être espionné dans sa création.][19]

The allusion to Balzac anticipates the discussion of artistic and intellectual obsession and its influence on the conjugal connection, which is developed in the course of the film and of the entire Antoine Doinel cycle of films. The presence of *The 400 Blows* also resonates in the fire that is caused by Antoine when he lights a candle for Balzac and behaves, in fact, like Bernard Palissy, who was Balzac's model for Balthazar Claës in *Quest of the Absolute*.

The complex of echoes between *Stolen Kisses* and *The 400 Blows*, and between these two films and *Quest of the Absolute* and *The Lily of the Valley*, tightens the affinity between the Antoine Doinel films and Balzac's *Scenes from Private Life*. When Antoine first tells one of his neighbors that he is writing a novel and is asked what the book is about, he says: "Well … Life in general … my youth … From the particular to the general" (*Bed and Board*, 1970, 0:56:26–0:56:31 min.).

In this dialogue Truffaut emphasizes the affinity between the biographical memories and their universal representation. The story of his youth will constitute a microcosm of the society he lives in. These words reverberate like a kind of interpretation of Troyat's words about Balzac:

> His idea, at present, is to write some short stories with accents of truth, destined first of all for the newspapers, and in which the action would take place either in Paris

> or in the provinces. In each of the scenes he would plunge into the thickest of the families, unveil the mysteries of conjugal existence, the sorrows and the compromises that hide under the appearances of respectability. Most of the time the *Scenes from Private Life* are dominated by the vicissitudes of the conjugal situation. Behind this display of physical and moral miseries is all the experience that Honoré had known, in the very *milieu* of the Balzac tribe.
>
> [Son idée, à présent, est d'écrire de courts récits aux accents véridiques, destinés d'abord aux journaux, et dont l'action se situera soit à Paris, soit en province. Dans chacun de ces tableaux, il plongera au plus épais des familles, il dévoilera les mystères de l'existance à deux, les tristesses et les compromissions qui couvent sous les apparences de la respectabilité. La plupart du temps, les *Scènes de la vie privée* sont dominées par les vicissitudes de la situation conjugale. Il y a, derrière cet étalage de misères morales et physiques, toute l'expérience d'Honoré qui a connu, au milieu même de la tribu Balzac.][20]

That is to say that the story of the Balzac tribe will display a picture of Paris and the provinces, of French society in his period. The connection between Balzac's literary project and the Antoine Doinel films becomes even clearer in Troyat's summation of *Père Goriot*:

> In a word, this novel offers a cardinal innovation: the return of the characters from one book to another. What at the beginning of the enterprise had been no more than a coincidence, if not a matter of negligence, became a system. Intersecting roads connected the different volumes of the series with one another. From now on, a fictive universe would exist in which the same doctors, the same policemen, the same financiers, the same usurers, the same men of the law, the same women of fashion, would circulate. The reader would greet them in passing like old acquaintances. They would procure for him the illusion of entering on the same level into a world as true as the world he was accustomed to live in. There would be, on the one side, the humanity created by God, and on the other, that created by Balzac.
>
> [Enfin, ce roman offre une innovation capitale: le retour des personnages d'un livre à l'autre. Ce qui n'était au commencement de l'entreprise qu'une coïncidence, voire une négligence, devient un système. Des chemins de traverse relient entre eux les différents volumes de la série. Désormais, il y aura un univers fictif où circuleront les mêmes médecins, les mêmes policiers, les mêmes financiers, les mêmes usuriers, les mêmes hommes de loi, les mêmes femmes à la mode. Le lecteur les saluera au passage comme de vieilles connaissances. Elles lui procureront l'illusion d'entrer de plain-pied dans un monde aussi vrai que celui où il est habitué à vivre. Il y aura d'un côté l'humanité créée par Dieu, de l'autre celle créée par Balzac.][21]

Troyat's description of Balzac's innovative literary project entailing "the return of the characters from one book to another" aptly characterizes what Truffaut does in the Antoine Doinel films. Truffaut, indeed, is the first filmmaker in the history of cinema to grapple with a task identical to the one that Balzac took upon himself in literature a hundred years or so earlier.[22]

Truffaut continues to spin out the line that connects him with Balzac by means of Antoine, who calls his son Alphonse, against the will of Christine, who thinks Alphonse is a strange and foreign name. Antoine insists and registers his son under the name Alphonse, because in his mind no name is more French than the name of the second

son of Laurence, Balzac's sister. This choice echoes an identical act by Truffaut, who named his daughters Laura and Eve,[23] and it returns the discussion to the autobiographical connection of the fiction.

Last but not least, Balzac's *La Peau de Chagrin* plays an important role in two of Truffaut's films. In *The Mississippi Mermaid* (*La Sirène Du Mississippi*, 1969) the protagonist, Louis (Jean Paul Belmondo) discovers this book in a deserted hut and reacts as if he had found a priceless treasure. In *Fahrenheit 451* (1966) it is one of the hidden burned books in Montag's (Oscar Werner) apartment. Thus it is part of the protagonist's literature canon.

This so intensive interweaving of direct and associative connections in nine major films by Truffaut calls for an explanation that goes beyond the accepted practice of employing a commonplace term such as "homage." Apart from the specific interpretation given to each such allusion, I want to give a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon itself. It appears to me that the full meaning of the multiplicity of constituents of the dialogue that Truffaut conducts with Balzac becomes clear in the last and concluding film of the Antoine Doinel cycle—his nineteenth film, *Love on the Run* (*L'Amour en Fuite*, 1979), where, in Bloomian terms, he achieves his distinctive "misreading" of Balzac's extensive work *The Human Comedy*.

In May 1978 Truffaut wrote to Annette Insdorf about his upcoming film: "I'm not terribly happy with the script of *L'Amour en fuite* which I start shooting in 2 weeks. The novelty will be having 'real' flashbacks (*400 Coups—L'Amour à 20 ans—Baisers volés—Domicile conjugal*)[24] but, in trying to integrate them smoothly, we've come up with a wishy-washy script that will be very difficult to improve."[25]

From this letter it appears that the motivating force of the film—the desire to employ real flashbacks—overcame his qualms about a flawed script. It is possible that the sense that what was involved was a cinematic innovation, the inspiration for which stems from a 130-year-old experiment by an author he admired, decided the issue. Truffaut's letter is reminiscent of Balzac's letter to Mme. Hanska from October 1841:

> To recount my life to you, my dear, is to recount, to enumerate to you my works, and what works! The publication of *The Human Comedy* (such is the title of the complete work the fragments of which have so far composed the works that I have given out) is to take two years and will contain five hundred densely printed sheets, and it is necessary for me to read it three times, which is as if I had a thousand five hundred densely printed sheets to read, and my regular works must not suffer. […] This general revision of my works, the classification of them, the achievement of diverse portions of the edifice are giving me a surplus of labor which I alone know and which is crushing.
>
> [Vous raconter ma vie, chère, c'est vous raconter, vous énumérer mes travaux, et quels travaux! L'édition de *La Comédie humaine* (tel est le titre de l'ouvrage complet dont les fragments ont composé jusqu'à présent les ouvrages que j'ai donnés) va prendre deux ans et contient cinq cents feuilles d'impression compacte, et il faut que je les lise trois fois, c'est comme si j'avais mille cinq cents feuilles compactes à lire, et mes travaux habituels n'en doivent pas souffrir. […] Cette révision générale de mes œuvres, leur classement, l'achèvement des diverses portions de l'édifice me donnent un surcroît de travail que moi seul connais et qui est écrasant.][26]

Truffaut is both aware of and troubled by his imperfect script, but he chooses to make a "Balzacian" experiment, to close the circle and to connect all the Antoine Doinel films into a single and complete unit, "The Adventures of Antoine Doinel." This time the self-quotation has an additional function, being a flashback of a new kind in cinema. What in *Antoine and Colette, Love at Twenty* (1962)[27] was a singular occurrence becomes a style and a new cinematic technique through the intensive and diversified use of this kind of flashback. In contrast to the traditional flashback, the aim of which is to convey information to the spectator, a flashback of this kind, which is known to the spectator from previous films, is poetic, and its function is emotive rather than informative. The flashback augments the spectator's sense of his prior acquaintance with Antoine and his life story. Beyond this, a connection is created between the various films and a containing of the space and the time that exist outside the film—the number of years that have passed between the various films—within the space and time of the film itself. For a spectator who does not know the earlier Antoine Doinel films, the flashback functions like an ordinary flashback, but also contributes to his acquaintance with the characters, beyond the information it contains, because it is "real," not a reconstruction embodied by different actors, or by one actor who simultaneously embodies two separate periods of life. The spectator in *Love on the Run*, be he new or a veteran, becomes absorbed in the story of Antoine's life since *The 400 Blows*. For the spectator who follows the series, the experience of watching the film is charged with the 20 years that have passed since he first saw *The 400 Blows* in 1959. An experience of a different kind, but entailing a similar principle, occurs for a spectator who watches the entire series of Antoine Doinel films consecutively. In this case too, the 20 years during which the series was made are compressed into a single cinematic unit. Truffaut extended the boundaries of film to beyond the screen and created a connection between the film and life itself in a new way that realizes one of the cinematic aspirations of the "New Wave" filmmakers, as well as of the Neo-Realists who preceded them.

As a natural continuation of her psychoanalytical approach to Truffaut's films, Anne Gillain sees this cinematic innovation as a Proustian experiment rather than a Balzacian one:

> *Love on the Run* presents itself first of all as an entirely new cinematographic experience. Recombining scraps from earlier films in order to integrate them into a contemporary narrative, the film weaves an evocation of the past that is unique to cinema. Its power stems not only from the physical transformations of Jean-Pierre Léaud from one fragment to another, but from those entire portions of earlier life that the image causes to adhere to his body. Truffaut thus retrieves, on the emotional level too, the aging of the streets of Paris, of women's fashions, of the vehicles, the aging even of the image itself in which the grain and the lighting vary from sequence to sequence. A Proustian film, *Love on the Run* does not content itself with filming "Death at Work"; it establishes a ludic relationship with it.
>
> [*L'Amour en fuite* se présente d'abord comme une expérience cinématographique entièrement nouvelle. Réunissant des bribes de films antérieurs pour les intégrer à un récit contemporian, le film tisse une évocation du passé unique au cinéma. Sa force ne tient pas seulement aux transformations physiques de Jean-Pierre Léaud d'un fragment à l'autre, mais à ces pans entiers de vie antérieure que l'image fait adhérer

> à son corps. Truffaut récupère ainsi au compte de l'émotion le vieillissement des rues de Paris, des modes féminines, des voitures, vieillissement même de l'image dont le grain et la lumière varient de séquence en séquence. Film proustien, *L'Amour en fuite* ne se contente pas de filmer 'La mort au travail,' il instaure avec elle une relation ludique.][28]

Since Gillain's overall approach to Truffaut's films is psychoanalytical, she does not relate to the excerpts from Truffaut's earlier films as possessing intertextual meaning, and sees them rather as fragments of memory and slices of autobiography. Her approach makes the meaning of the distinctive use of flashbacks of this kind more pointed. The essential difference between literature and cinema does not allow Truffaut to do in the "Antoine Doinel films" what Balzac did in *The Human Comedy*. Balzac, as he wrote in his letter to Mme. Hanska, went back and actually rewrote his earlier works in order to accord all of them the unity of a single work.

Truffaut had only one possibility of rewriting and influencing the entire structure: to use excerpts from the older films, which were already independent cinematic units that could not be changed. This intertextual dynamic is again two-directional: it both influences the film that quotes, and the film that is quoted. In this act Truffaut found a way to intervene once more in his older films without actually touching the completed and edited film that had already been screened.

A distinctive example of the rewriting of an earlier film may be found in the surprising encounter between Antoine and Lucien, his mother's lover in *The 400 Blows*. There the lover was presented from Antoine's point of view: the couple kiss in the street, and the man, a stranger, is not clearly visible. Antoine notices them and is astonished, and perceives his mother's alarm on being caught like this by her son. Antoine hurries away from there and the incident is not spoken about again between him and his mother, although in other scenes, with his father and with the psychologist, it turns out that Antoine is troubled by his mother cheating on his father. In the film *Love on the Run* an older man comes into the printing shop where Antoine is working. This is the same printing shop where Antoine slept when he ran away from home in *The 400 Blows*. The locale of the meeting hints to the spectator about the distant past. Antoine and the stranger notice each other from a distance, although it is not clear if they really recognize one another or attempt to avoid meeting. After a build-up of tension around this question, their gazes meet and they greet one another, and then have a conversation over a cup of coffee, about the past and about Antoine's mother, who has died in the meantime. Their conversation is accompanied by relevant flashbacks from *The 400 Blows*, and afterwards also from *Stolen Kisses*, when Antoine explains that he was absent from his mother's funeral because he was in a military prison at the time.

These scenes evoke a sense of oppression that we know from Truffaut's early conversations about *The 400 Blows*. Truffaut was troubled by the one-dimensionality of the mother in this film, which is not characteristic of his cinematic *oeuvre*, because he followed the premise of Renoir's aesthetics, that "everyone has motives." Hence in his films, as in Renoir's, there are no "good" and "bad" characters, only people who act out of their distress. In his encounter with Lucien, Antoine understands for the first time that his mother was a person with feelings, needs and wants. The character of

Lucien allows the mature Truffaut a perspective on his first film, which he had made 20 years earlier. He slightly balances the hard impression made by the mother in *The 400 Blows*. Lucien tells Antoine that his mother detested the hypocrisy of society, and took her frustrations out on those around her. He describes her as a little anarchistic bird. Lucien's point of view gives the spectator an entirely different impression of the mother. As he sees her she seems like a cinematic transformation of Catherine from *Jules et Jim*. This is a further example of Truffaut's ability to rewrite *The 400 Blows* after the event. Antoine, who had seen his mother as an egocentric *bourgeoise* seeking comfort, is amazed by what Lucien tells him. Lucien emphasizes to him that his mother loved him, even if her way of loving was peculiar. He helps Antoine to understand his mother, to accept her and be reconciled with her—a process that reaches its peak when he leads Antoine to his mother's grave. In the flashback of the scene of his mother's cheating on her husband, and her horrified look when she sees that Antoine has seen her, what is shown is the original raw material from *The 400 Blows*, but the mother's gaze at Antoine has been frozen in a "freeze-frame" in the laboratory. The freezing of the mother's face emphasizes the importance of this moment both for Antoine and for her, and constitutes a cinematic expression of the new status that the mother receives as an independent subject and not only as an object of Antoine's contemplation. Moreover, Antoine too is perceived for the first time in the mother's eyes as a subject and not as an object that stands in her way. Even if in actuality it is impossible to turn back the wheel of time, and the past, as it was presented in *The 400 Blows*, has shaped both Antoine's life and the way the spectator perceives him, this attempt to give expression to the mother's point of view turns the spectator's attention to the superficiality entailed in ignoring her. In this process of reworking his material Truffaut actually rewrites the original. Among the flashbacks that come up during the conversation between Antoine and Lucien there is also the scene in which Antoine lies to his teacher, saying that his mother has died, as an excuse for his absence from school. Only after processing the fantasy of killing his mother can Antoine visit her grave. To use Bloom's terms, we can say that the self-quotations in this film constitute a "misreading" of *The 400 Blows* and in fact a corrective rewriting of Antoine Doinel's entire life story. This claim is also supported by Gillain's words about the role of Truffaut's mother in *Jules et Jim*:

> In 1978, Truffaut, who declared to a journalist that he had become conscious of the film's personal dimension several years after it was shot, defined the role of the mother in the genesis of *Jules et Jim* in this way: "… I had a very difficult relationship with my family, particularly with my mother, and I understood only after some years that I had made *Jules et Jim* to please her and to obtain her approbation. Love played a big role in her life, and as *The 400 Blows* had been like a stab in the back to her, I made *Jules et Jim* in the hope of showing her that I understood her."
>
> [En 1978, Truffaut, qui déclarait à un journaliste avoir pris conscience de la dimension personelle du film des années après son tournage, définissait ainsi le rôle de sa mère dans la genèse de *Jules et Jim*: "… J'avais une relation très difficile avec ma famille, en particulier avec ma mère, et j'ai compris il y a seulement quelques années que j'ai fait *Jules et Jim* pour lui plaire et obtenir son approbation. L'amour jouait un grand rôle dans sa vie, et comme *Les 400 Coups* était pour elle comme un coup de

couteau dans le dos, j'ai fait *Jules et Jim* dans l'espoir de lui montrer que je la comprenais."][29]

That is to say that if at the outset of his path as a filmmaker Truffaut took the trouble to make an additional film in order to rewrite certain elements from his earlier film, in *Love on the Run* he found a suitable cinematic way to rewrite his entire cinematic corpus, not by means of an antithesis, but by means of quotation and misreading of earlier materials.

After his visit to his mother's grave Antoine arrives at a new insight about his difficulties in communicating with women. This insight leads him to write a confession addressed to his beloved Sabine, who has grown tired of his caprices. This sequence incorporates flashbacks from the Antoine Doinel films, as he reveals his life story to Sabine for the first time. In this series of flashbacks, one flashback taken from the film *The Man Who Loved Women* (1977) stands out, where the hero of the film, Bertrand Morane, after his mother's death, discovers all her lovers' letters and photographs. In the wake of this discovery he realizes that his obsessive pursuit of women is connected with his relations with his mother and constitutes a reconstruction of her relations with members of the opposite sex. A spectator who is unfamiliar with Truffaut's films may make the mistake of thinking that this flashback is part of the sequence of flashbacks taken from *The 400 Blows* and may confuse the young Antoine with the young Bertrand Morane. By this move Truffaut creates a parallel between the two protagonists and includes *The Man Who Loved Women* as an additional component in the Antoine Doinel series. *The Man Who Loved Women*, then, connects with a sequence in Antoine's autobiography and thus also in Truffaut's autobiography. Truffaut expropriates the exclusivity of the Antoine Doinel films over his autobiography, and extends it to his entire corpus of films. He thus creates an autobiographical circle in which Antoine is the autobiographical alter ego of Truffaut and Bertrand is the autobiographical alter ego of Antoine. The affinity between Antoine's childhood and Bertrand's leads to the insight that Antoine reveals in his letter to Sabine: "Love is the contrary of prison." Truffaut's heroes desperately seek love, as part of their struggle for their freedom (just as in *The 400 Blows* an analogy exists between *la mer* [the sea—freedom] and a word with the same sound, *la mère* [the mother]). The tragedy of his heroes is that in spite of this they flee from their love in the name of freedom, because of their lack of awareness of the forces motivating them. At the end of his letter to Sabine, Antoine writes about their relations in the past, and this time Truffaut uses an ordinary flashback, in the classical sense of the word—one that was shot especially for this film. This conventional flashback is an exception in the film's style, and actually emphasizes the change that Antoine goes through at this moment, as he moves outside his egocentric world and is able to make room for Sabine and her needs.

Thus, entire excerpts from the various Antoine Doinel films are interspersed throughout this film, so much so that the film becomes a new and consecutive editing of Antoine's life story.[30] All the quotations contribute to the new editing, but several of them have an additional function that is worth pausing over. When Antoine and Christine travel to the courthouse in a taxi in order to get divorced, there is a flashback of Antoine from *Stolen Kisses*, in which he tries to kiss Christine in a wine cellar, and she rejects him. Immediately after this the camera focuses on Christine's face and after

this we see a flashback of her from *Bed and Board* (*Domicile Conjugal*), where she attempts to kiss Antoine in the same wine cellar and he is not as enthusiastic as she. In *Bed and Board* this scene functions as a humoristic quotation from *Stolen Kisses*. In the original films the scenes were seen from an objective point of view, and had the status of a truth told to us by the director. In the new context, the close-ups of Antoine's face and afterwards of Christine's face accord the scenes a status that is solely subjective. Truffaut plays here with shifts of point of view, and thus accords the two different events the status of a single event that is seen each time from the point of view of one of the two characters. Each of them recalls the scene differently. Each of them believes that he or she was the one who initiated the attempt and was rejected. They both live in a misunderstanding, each of them feeling rejected and convinced that he or she gives love that is not accepted.

The fact that these shifts of points of view take place while the couple are on their way to their divorce ceremony gives the occasion a tragic quality of missing the mark due to the lack of communication between them. In cinematic terms, Truffaut here conducted an experiment that implemented the Soviet theory of montage, which says that each shot receives its meaning from the shot that precedes it and the shot that follows it, as summed up by Andrew Tudor in his book *Theories of Film* when he explains Eisenstein's conclusions from the Kuleshov experiment:

> It followed that one of the important factors influencing an audience's response, to a film revolves around the juxtaposition of the shots involved. … Eisenstein tried to conceive it in a theoretically more sophisticated way. For him it was from the "collision" of independent shots that the meaning arose in the minds of the audience.[31]

In this way Truffaut repeated the Kuleshov experiment as an organic part of his film, and created a new meaning for the old raw materials, which in the context of the early films did not have an identical meaning. Again we have before us a "misreading" of *Stolen Kisses* and *Bed and Board*.

The interplay of shifting points of view takes on a different meaning further on in the film, when Truffaut creates a gap between an event as it happened and the way in which Antoine chooses to describe it. When Colette reads Antoine's autobiographical book we see what she reads as a flashback. Truffaut uses a short excerpt from *L'Amour à Vingt Ans* of Antoine looking out the window of his room towards Colette's apartment, and on the soundtrack we hear Antoine reading the lines of the book that Colette is reading (this is of course not the original soundtrack of the imported scene). According to the written version, Antoine chose to part from Colette, but unfortunately for him, her family moved into an apartment opposite his own. This description is a distortion of the reality known to those spectators who have seen *L'Amour à Vingt Ans*, for there it is Colette who rejects him, while he persists, and moves into an apartment opposite hers. Cinematically, Truffaut has played with the relation between the picture and the soundtrack. The attaching of a different soundtrack to the same picture changes the meaning registered by the spectator. At this moment of the film a gap is created between the spectators who do not know the earlier film and those who do know it. This gap is closed later when Colette meets Antoine and protests to him about his rewriting of the past. This time the original scene is shown in full, from

Colette's point of view, which is identical to the objective point of view as it appeared in the original film. Antoine claims in his defense that this is an autobiographical novel, that is, an adaptation of the reality into a novel. What actually happened does not oblige him. Here Truffaut provokes a discussion about the complex connection between autobiographical fiction and reality. He himself, in the Antoine Doinel films and in his other films as well, has behaved as Antoine has in his novel. A distinctive example of this is Antoine's invention, in *The 400 Blows*, of his mother's death. This is a detail taken from the life of Truffaut as a child, who had lied in school and claimed that his father had been taken to a concentration camp. The narrative nucleus was taken from his actual life, but Truffaut adapted it to suit the dramatic needs of the film.

The discussion of autobiography's obligation to reality, which Truffaut provokes by means of Antoine, justifies the title "Salad of Love" that Antoine finally decides to give to his autobiographical book. In the film *Bed and Board* Antoine is in a dilemma about what title to give his book, and a neighbor suggests the title "Neither trumpets nor drums" (*Bed and Board*, 1970, 0:56:51–0:56:53 min.). The name Antoine chooses, which we hear about for the first time here, alludes to the "salad" that Antoine makes of all the events of his life, while the book, in the end, is different from the multiplicity of its components. Actually, "salad" also constitutes an image of the cinematic project that Truffaut carries out here with his earlier films that are components in the present cinematic product, *Love on the Run*.

The complex dialectics between reality and fiction receive a unique cinematic expression in the scene of the confrontation between Antoine and Colette about the truth of his autobiographical description. In the full flashback, Colette arrives with her parents to visit Antoine in his new apartment. Conspicuous on the wall behind him is a stills photograph of Jean Pierre Léaud from *The 400 Blows*. We have before us three different levels of representation of reality at three points of time, and the further back the time is, the more the medium of the reflection changes: the present is represented by the color film itself, *Love on the Run*; the recent past is represented by a flashback from *Love at Twenty*, on black-and-white film; while the distant past from *The 400 Blows*, which is not known to Colette, is made present by means of a stills photograph of Antoine from those days.

When Colette reads Antoine's book, one of the flashback fragments is taken from the film *Stolen Kisses*. This is a moment when Antoine and Christine are sitting together on a park bench. Antoine asks Christine for a handkerchief. She offers him a tissue, and he says that he doesn't use paper. This flashback at first seems like yet another excerpt from one of the earlier films, but receives an additional meaning later on in the film, when Sabine is sitting in a cinema with Xavier, Colette's boyfriend. Sabine asks Xavier for a handkerchief, he offers her a tissue, and she replies that she doesn't use paper. This is a quotation of Antoine and Christine from the beginning of the film, which is a flashback from *Stolen Kisses*. The meaning of the double quotation is complex. It may be that Sabine has read Antoine's *Salad of Love* and is quoting from it. It may be that Sabine is like Antoine, and that we have here a cinematic expression of one of the small details that link these two people who are meant for each other, and this also contains a hint about the film's conclusion. The third meaning of this quotation is in the dramatic function it has. At this stage of the film the spectator does not yet know that Sabine is Xavier's sister, and mistakenly thinks, like Colette who loves Xavier, that

Sabine is his lover, and that she is being unfaithful to Antoine. This pattern of occurrences, which is identical to the one between Antoine and Christine, reinforces this illusion and contributes to a heightening of the film's narrative tension.

While the excerpts of the previous Antoine Doinel films that are dispersed throughout the film serve as flashbacks of Antoine, Christine and Colette, the self-quotations from Truffaut's other films that are not a part of the pageant of Antoine Doinel's life serve as flashbacks of Truffaut himself. In this intertextual dynamic, Truffaut adds a tier to the parallel between himself as a film director and his autobiographical alter ego Antoine as a writer.

Already at the beginning of the film, Antoine leaves Sabine's apartment and declares that he feels no commitment to her: he has to return home and shave and do all the other things entailed in his routine of getting up in the morning. The spectator identifies Antoine with Jim from *Jules et Jim*, who abandons Gilberte at an early hour of the morning, claiming that if he spends even one complete night at her place he will feel as though they were married, and will have guilt feelings afterwards about his lack of absolute fidelity. The identical situations have to do with an intertextual connection, and are not a mere repetition by the director of a motif he has used in the past, since they appear in the context of further quotations from *Jules et Jim* in the course of the film. Sabine's name is identical to that of Catherine's daughter, and the 20 years that have passed between the two films hint at the theoretical possibility that she may be Catherine's daughter. This hint reinforces the possibility that Antoine in this film is a possible transformation of Jim. The possibility of a connection between Sabine from *Love on the Run* and Catherine from *Jules et Jim* is stronger than what is suggested by the name alone. In the course of the film we learn that Antoine looked for and found Sabine after collecting the torn scraps of her photograph that had been thrown out in anger by her previous boyfriend. Antoine pasted the pieces together as though constructing a precious mosaic, and began an obsessive search for the woman whose image he had recreated—Sabine. This is an allusion to Jules' and Jim's desperate quest for the face whose smile would be identical to that of the Greek statue, which they then found in Catherine and decided that she was the woman with the smile they had been seeking. Later on in the film, when Sabine rejects Antoine's attempts to return to her, she throws a bundle of love letters that he had sent her out of the window at him, and calls them "a bundle of lies." This time this is a verbal quotation of Catherine's words as she burns love letters from different men in her life and explains to Jim that she is "burning a bundle of lies." If the relations of Antoine and Sabine are a new cycle in the transformation of the relations of Catherine and Jim, then the relations of friendship between Antoine and Christine, the wife he is separated from, reveal themselves as a variation of the relations between Catherine and Jules. In the flashback taken from *Bed and Board*, of Antoine's visit to Christine, we see a picture of Jules as Mozart that is identical to the picture that hangs in Catherine and Jules' home in *Jules et Jim*. The multiplicity of quotations and contexts creates a "misreading," the function of which is to examine the development of the relationship between Antoine and Sabine, and Antoine's maturing as a consequence of his encounter with Lucien and his visit to his mother's grave. This maturing enables him to achieve a real connection with a woman. For the first time in the Antoine Doinel cycle, and in fact for the first time in all of Truffaut's films, a man manages to achieve a "real" connection with a woman and to

remain alive. The moment of the accomplishment of the connection receives its cinematic expression at the end of the film *Love on the Run* in two successive scenes between two couples. As a prelude to the central plot, the camera focuses on Colette who arrives at Xavier's bookshop, and Xavier, who had rejected her throughout the entire film, now greets her warmly. What happens between the two is hinted at in a distorting intertextual move. The camera is situated in the street and shoots the front of the shop from the outside. Xavier pulls down the shutter of the display window. The shutter is partially lowered, so that the shop's name, BARNERIAS, is partially blocked, and what we see of it is the combination of letters BARN—a cliché for the place where people make love in Hollywood films. This is Truffaut's way of hinting to the viewer about what is happening there between Xavier and Colette. Moreover, this is also his distortion that relates to the Hollywood films he so admires. In Truffaut's film the "barn" where lovers make love is the bookstore, while a line is drawn between the book and love, between art and eroticism.

Immediately after this Truffaut's camera moves to the film's main plot, when Antoine, like Colette, arrives at the records store where Sabine works. At first Sabine rejects him, but finally succumbs to his seductive charms and allows him to enter. She hears from him for the first time about how he found her through the torn scraps of her picture that he had found in the street. Her reconstructed picture, accompanied by Antoine's captivating romantic story, convince her of the sincerity of his love, and she responds to him. The moment of their drawing near to each other and of their kiss is built by Truffaut by means of a double intertextual move that closes the film, and the Antoine Doinel series of films as well, and in a certain sense, cinema up to this point. Truffaut integrates a sequence of rapid and circular camera movements around Antoine and Sabine kissing. When the camera reaches them the picture is in focus, and when it leaves them from one side and approaches them from the other side it moves so quickly that the background is entirely blurred (swish pan). These shots of Antoine and Sabine are edited alternately with pictures of Antoine hovering in the air in a rotating amusement park machine from *The 400 Blows*.[32] In the new scene in *Love on the Run* a zoetrope effect is produced once again, this time not by means of an amusement park machine but by purely cinematic means: cinematography, editing and intertextuality. This is a multi-level zoetrope effect: a zoetrope in the transition from one picture to the next by means of the rapid and rotating shooting and of the editing; a zoetrope whose cinematic raw materials are the first film in the series, *The 400 Blows*, and the end of the last film, *Love on the Run*. In terms of ideas, this zoetrope by necessity contains all of Antoine's life that has transpired between these two points of time. Finally, this is a metaphoric zoetrope, which draws a line between the beginnings of the cinema of Edison and Lumière and Truffaut's cinema at this point in time—1979. In this metaphoric zoetrope the entire history of cinema is implicit, while the canonical films in this history are the raw materials that compose the pictures of the zoetrope that create a succession of movement. In *Love on the Run* Antoine completes his long process of maturation, and thus the series of Antoine Doinel films reaches its natural conclusion. This interpretation corresponds with the statement by Truffaut's biographers, de Baecque and Toubiana, that in the early 1980s Truffaut closed a circle with regard to his past, and that this fact influenced the character of his films: "According to Depardieu, 'Truffaut was done with his past' and ready for a new cycle."[33]

As we have seen, the interpretation of *Love on the Run* cannot be fully discovered without drawing upon all of Truffaut's films that preceded it, and at the same time it accords new meaning to extensive portions of his earlier films. This conclusion returns us to Hugo's eulogy for Balzac that was quoted at the beginning of this essay and to the Bloomian perception that Truffaut's profound and hidden "wrestling with the dead giants" throughout his entire corpus was with Balzac, with the latter's life project as concisely expressed by Victor Hugo. Thus Truffaut the filmmaker aspired, even if unconsciously, to realize what Balzac had realized as a writer. From the discussion of the films before us we have seen that they constituted an innovation and a breakthrough, both in the conception of space and time in cinema, and in the exploration of the connection between reality and its cinematic representation and other cultural representations of reality.

NOTES

1. This essay has been translated from the Hebrew by Richard Flantz, who also translated from the French the quotations from Troyat and Gillain.
2. H. Troyat, *Balzac* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 526.
3. *The 400 Blows* (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1959), *Antoine and Colette, Love at Twenty* (*Antoine et Colette, L'Amour à Vingt Ans*, 1962), *Stolen Kisses* (*Baisers Volés*, 1968), *Bed and Board* (*Domicile Conjugale*, 1970), and *Love on the Run* (*L'Amour en Fuite*, 1979).
4. H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).
5. A. Preminger, *Cinematic Intertextuality and the Cinema of François Truffaut*, Ph.D. dissertation [in Hebrew, with English summary] (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2001), 7–10.
6. F. Truffaut and M. Moussy, *The 400 Blows: The Filmscript*, ed. David Danby (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), 88.
7. Troyat, *Balzac*, 254.
8. *Ibid*., 457.
9. F. Truffaut, *Letters*, ed. J. Jacob and C. De Givaray (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), 458.
10. Troyat, *Balzac*, 36.
11. Before Truffaut, a few films had been made that contained distinctively autobiographical elements (for example Vigo's *Zéro de conduite*), but the Antoine Doinel films, in their seriality, become no longer isolated cases but a phenomenon that calls for attention and needs to be related to.
12. F. Truffaut, *The Films in My Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 7.
13. *Ibid*., 19.
14. Troyat, *Balzac*, 234–5.
15. *Ibid*., 80.
16. F. Truffaut, *Jules et Jim* (Paris: Seuil/Avant-Scène, 1962).
17. Troyat, *Balzac*, 286–7.
18. A basic element that cannot be decomposed chemically.
19. Troyat, *Balzac*, 254–5.
20. *Ibid*., 147.
21. *Ibid*., 268.
22. It is interesting to note that even after Truffaut, hardly any project similar to his has been seen in the cinema. A few isolated instances may be seen in Krzysztof Kiszlowski's *Decalogue* (1988), where the main character in each of the chapters of the "Decalogue" appears as a secondary character in other chapters and the plots of all the chapters take place in the same neighborhood in Warsaw and at parallel or proximate times. In his "Tricolor" trilogy (1992–94), too, Kiszlowski does a similar thing, when in the third film, *Red*, all the central

characters from the two previous films, *Blue* and *White*, reappear as the sole survivors of a ferry that sank in the English Channel.

23. There are various myths concerning the names of Truffaut's daughters. De Baecque and Toubiana cautiously state that Laura was named after her grandmother and do not relate to the source of Eve's name: see A. de Baecque and S. Toubiana, *Truffaut—A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 132. In other literature about Truffaut it is considered that Truffaut named his first daughter, born in 1959, Laura, after the enigmatic character in Otto Preminger's film *Laura* (1944). He named his second daughter, born in 1961, Eve, after Joseph Mankiewicz's film *All About Eve* (1950). To this I can only add that one cannot ignore the fact that Laura was also the name of Balzac's second sister (not Alphonse's mother).
24. In the final film of the cycle, Truffaut used real excerpts from the films he refers to here, and also from other films not mentioned in this letter.
25. Truffaut, *Letters*, 478.
26. Troyat, *Balzac*, 389–90.
27. In this film Truffaut for the first time made use of raw material from *The 400 Blows*, which had been shot three years earlier, as Antoine's flashback.
28. A. Gillain, "Topologie de 'L'Amour en fuite'," *L'Avant Scène cinéma* 254 (October, 1980): 5.
29. A. Gillain, *Le Cinéma Selon François Truffaut* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 143–4; A. Gillain, *François Truffaut: Le Sécret Perdu* (Paris: Hatier, 1991), 92–3.
30. All in all the film contains 70 excerpts taken from nine of Truffaut's films: *Stolen Kisses* (17), *Bed and Board* (15), *The 400 Blows* (14), *Love at Twenty* (13), *Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me* (3), *Two English Girls* (3), *Day For Night* (2), *The Man Who Loved Women* (2), and *Mississippi Mermaid* (1).
31. A. Tudor, *Theories of Film* (New York: Cinema One, The Viking Press, 1973), 30.
32. In my study, *Cinematic Intertextuality and the Cinema of François Truffaut*, the reader will find a detailed discussion of this scene (48–50); I develop there Annette Insdorf's claim that the scene creates an analogy between the machine that Antoine hovers in and the zoetrope, which represents the beginnings of cinema. See A. Insdorf, *François Truffaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 152.
33. de Baecque & S. Toubiana, *Truffaut—A Biography*, 380.

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